

Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division

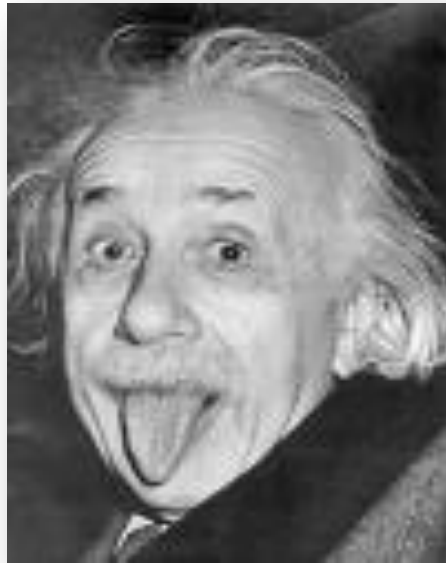
Anthony S. Muhammad, Ph.D.

Purpose

“The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone ultimately has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone’s business.”

Michael Fullan, *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership* (2003)

Is Change Necessary?



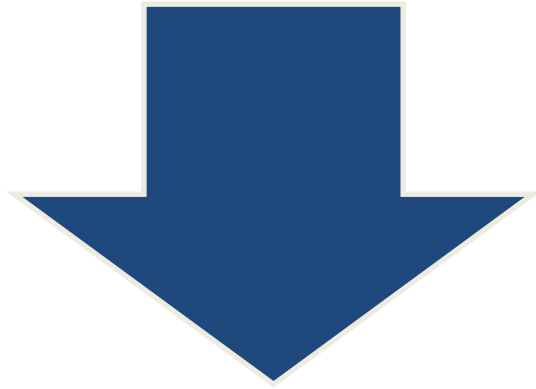
“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

—Albert Einstein

Two Forms of Change

- Technical
- Cultural

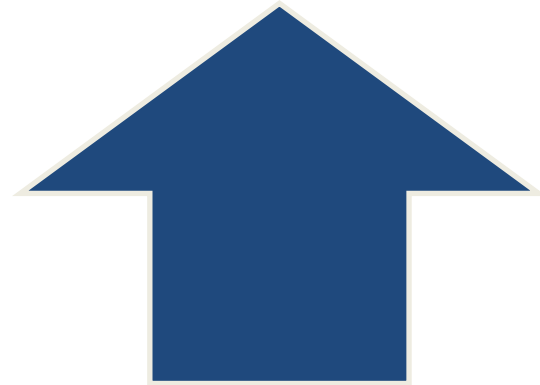
Will and Skill



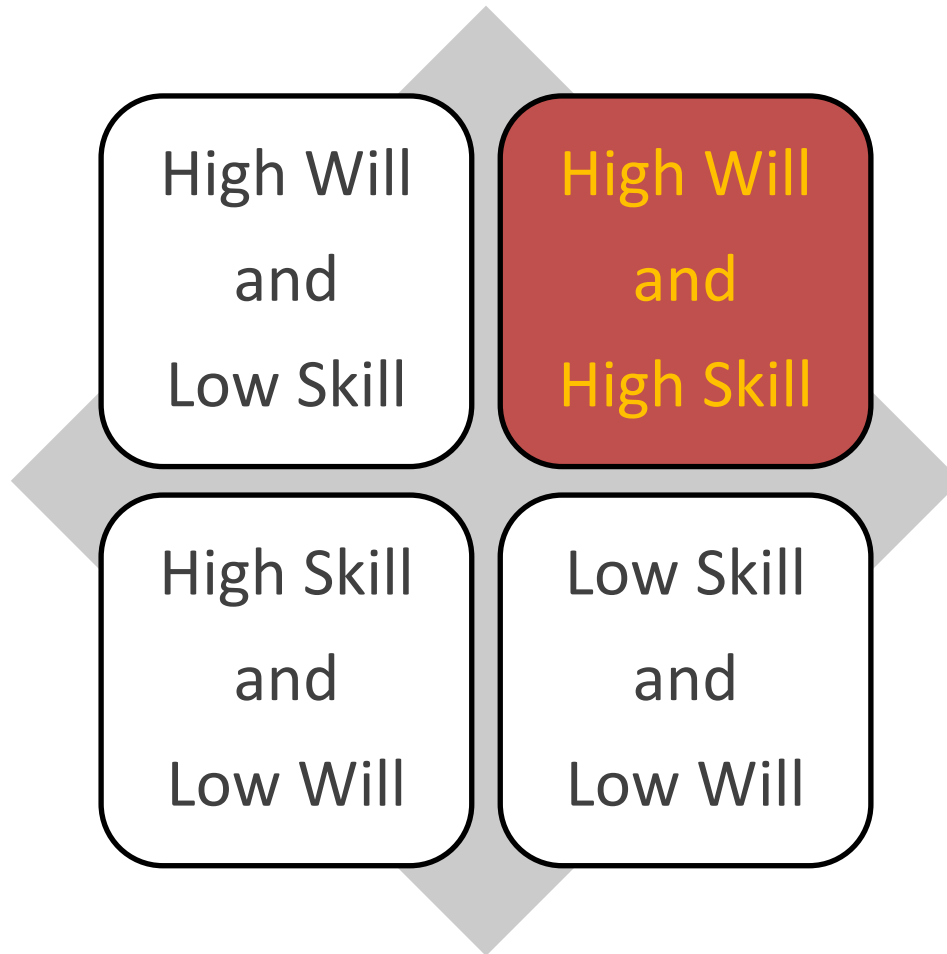
Culture



Pedagogy



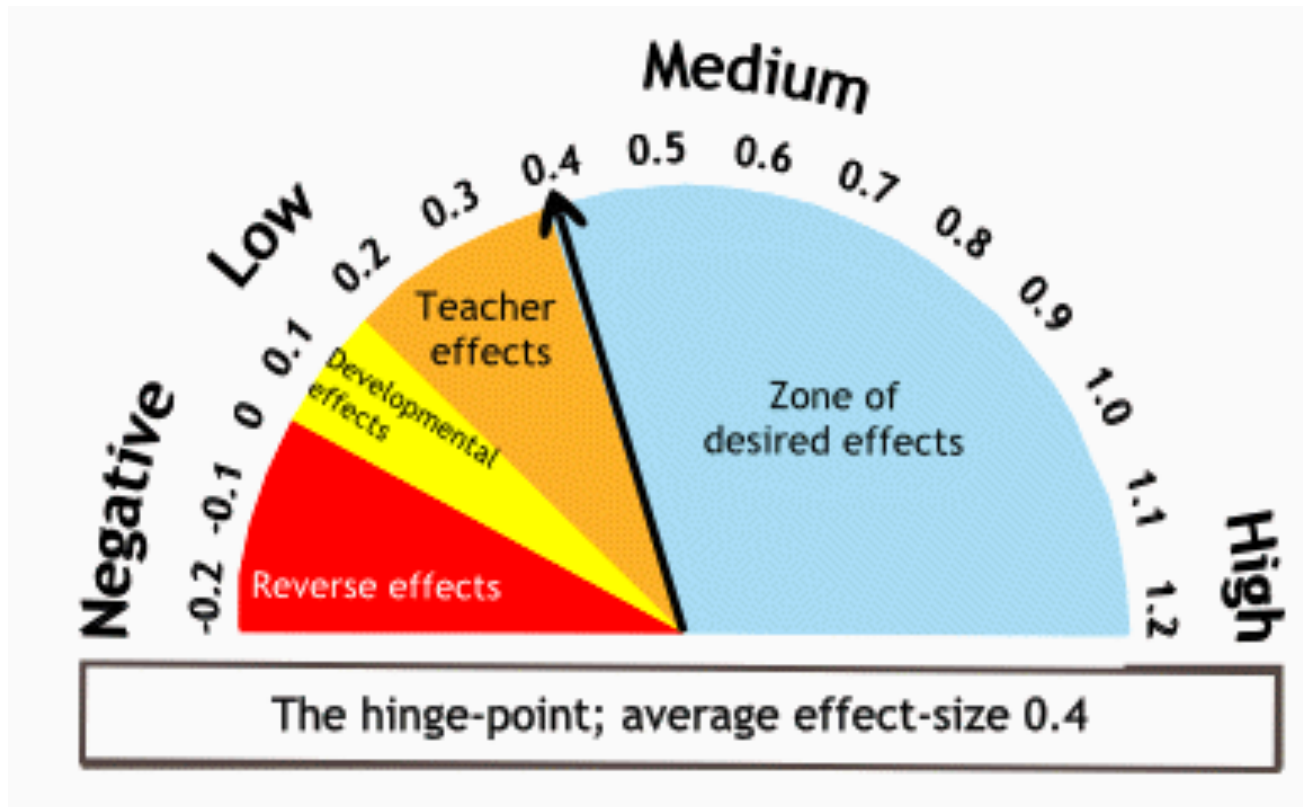
High Will and High Skill



Technical vs. Cultural

- Both forms of change are essential to improving organizations.
- Schools tend to focus heavily on technical changes and spend little time on cultural change.
- Deep change cannot be accomplished without cultural change.

Evidence Based Practices (Skill)



-Hattie, Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement, 2009

Four Corollary PLC Questions

- What do we want student to know and be able to do?
- How do we know if students have learned?
- How do we respond when students don't learn?
- How de we respond when students have learned?

Professional Learning Communities

Targets

Q1. What do we want students to know and be able to do?

Evidence

Q2. How will we know if they get it or can do it?

Action

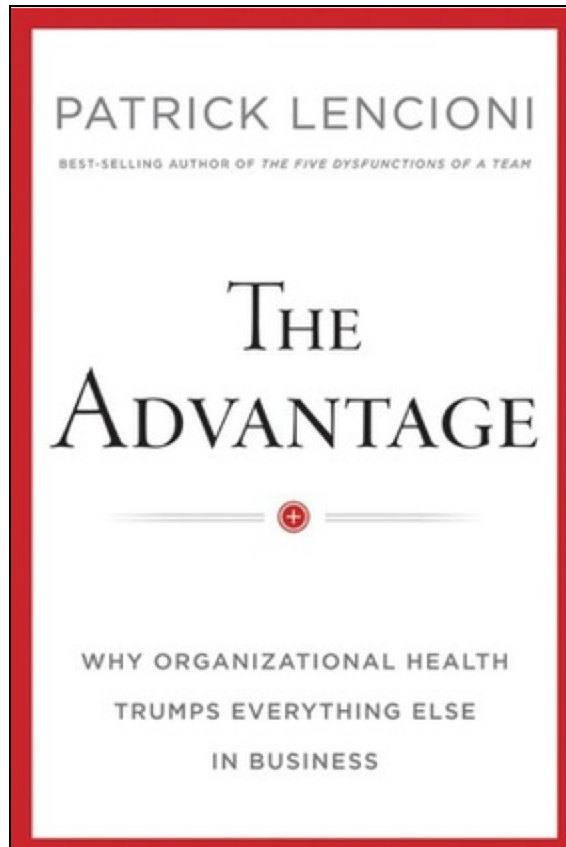
Q3. How will we respond when they don't learn?

Q4. How will we respond when they do learn, or already know it?

Evidence Based Practices (Skill)

Desired Practices (>.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching clarity (.75)• Providing formative evaluation (.9)• Feedback (.73)• Response to Intervention (1.07)
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Don't Underestimate Culture



“The health of an organization provides the context for strategy, finance, marketing, and everything else that happens within it, which is why it is the single greatest factor determining an organization’s success. More than talent. More than knowledge. More than innovation.”

—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012), p. 2

Choosing Being “Smart” Over Being “Healthy”

Smart

- The “sophistication bias”
- The “adrenaline bias”
- The “quantification bias”

Healthy

- Build a cohesive team.
- Creating clarity.
- Reinforcing clarity

—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012)

Avoiding Culture

“Most leaders prefer to look for answers where the light is better, where they are more comfortable. And the light is certainly better in the measurable, objective, and data-driven world of organizational intelligence (the smart side of the equation) than in the messier, more unpredictable world of organizational health.”

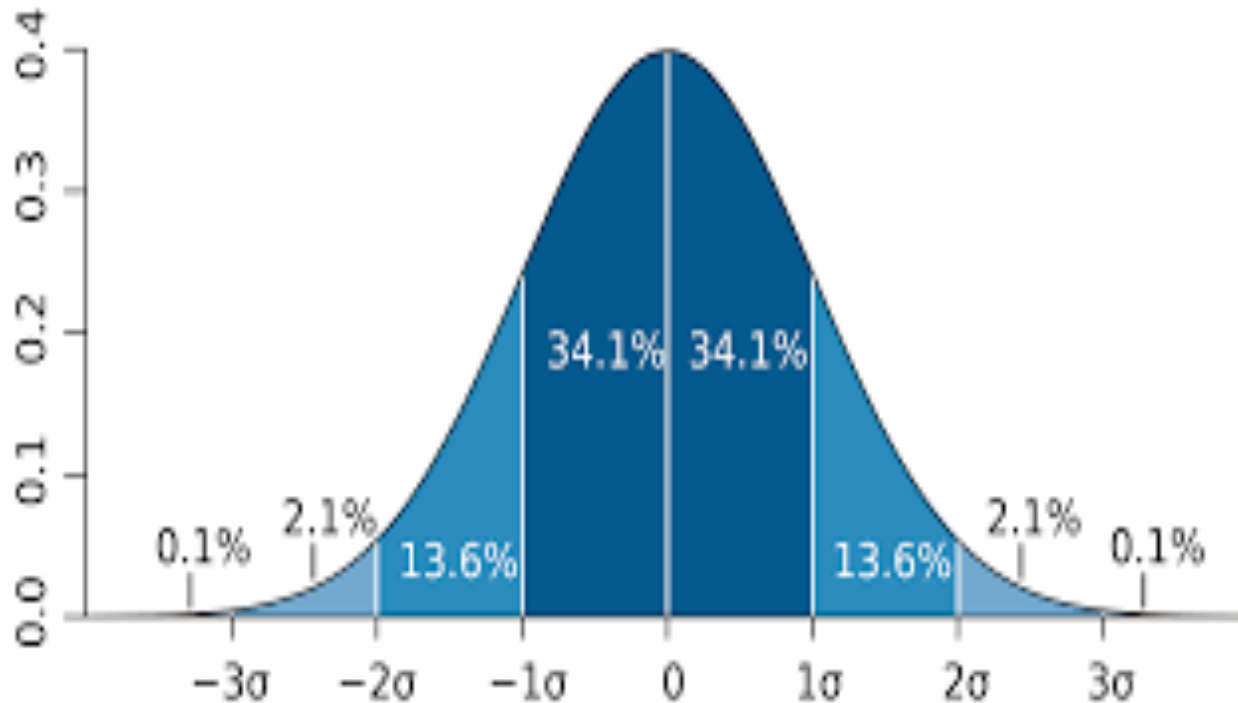
—Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (2012), p. 7

Apprenticeship of Observation

- Educators have been socialized in their field since childhood and adopt the norms
- The average educator was a good student
- Educators subconsciously protect a system that was of personal benefit
- Educators implement practices that protect the system (academic obstacle course)

(Lortie, *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*, 1975)

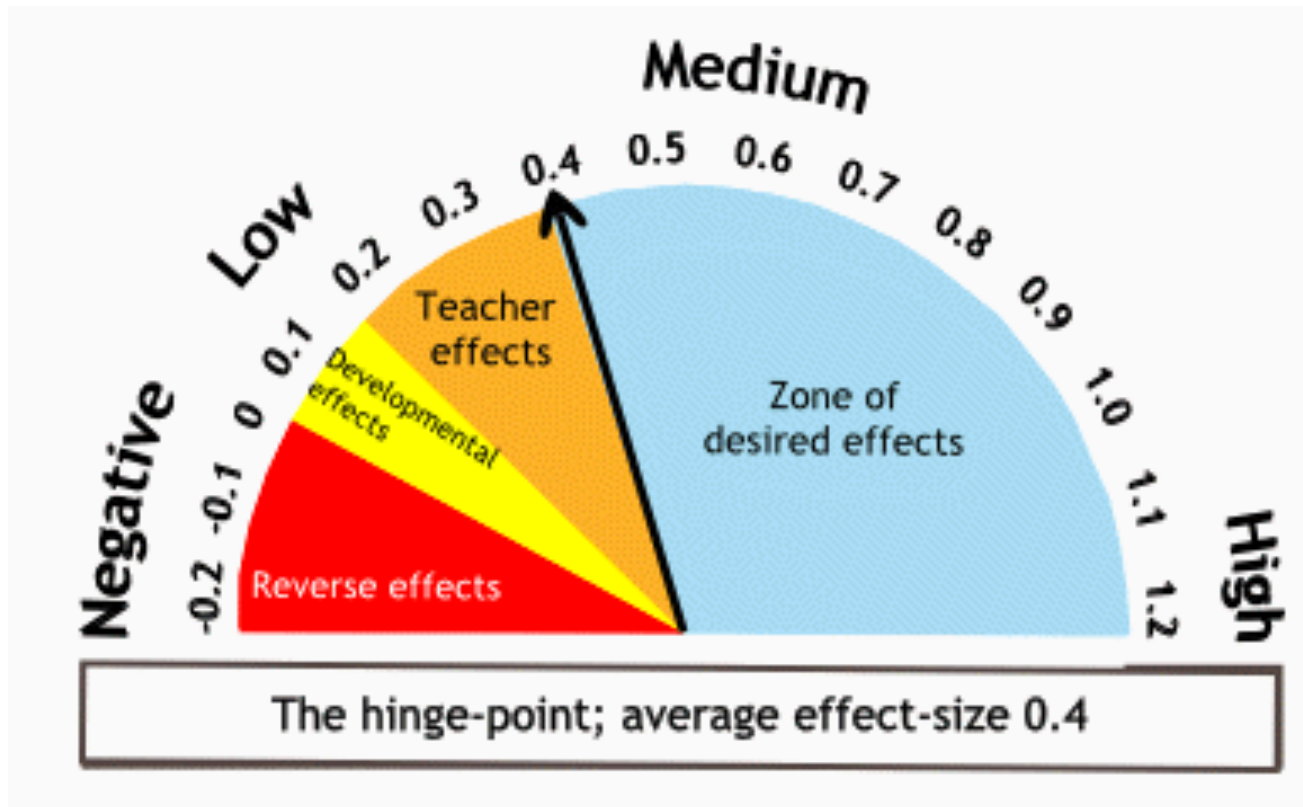
A Focus on Learning



Predetermination

- Perceptual
- Intrinsic
- Institutional

Evidence Based Practices (Will)



-Hattie, Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement, 2009

Teacher Estimates of Achievement

1.62

*Collective Teacher
Efficacy*

1.57

*Student Self-Reported
Grades (Student
Confidence/Efficacy)*

1.44

Pause to Think!

- Have your school improvement efforts been heavily technical or cultural?
- Do you and your colleagues typically do things “with” students or “to” students?
- How have the three forms of Predetermination manifested in your school?

School Culture

“School culture is the set of norms, values, and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the ‘persona’ of the school”

Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

“Healthy” School Culture

“Educators have an unwavering belief in the ability of all of their students to achieve success, and they pass that belief on to others in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the ability of every student.”

Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

“Toxic” School Culture

“Educators believe that student success is based upon students’ level of concern, attentiveness, prior knowledge, and willingness to comply with the demands of the school, and they articulate that belief in overt and covert ways. Educators create policies and procedures and adopt practices that support their belief in the impossibility of universal achievement.”

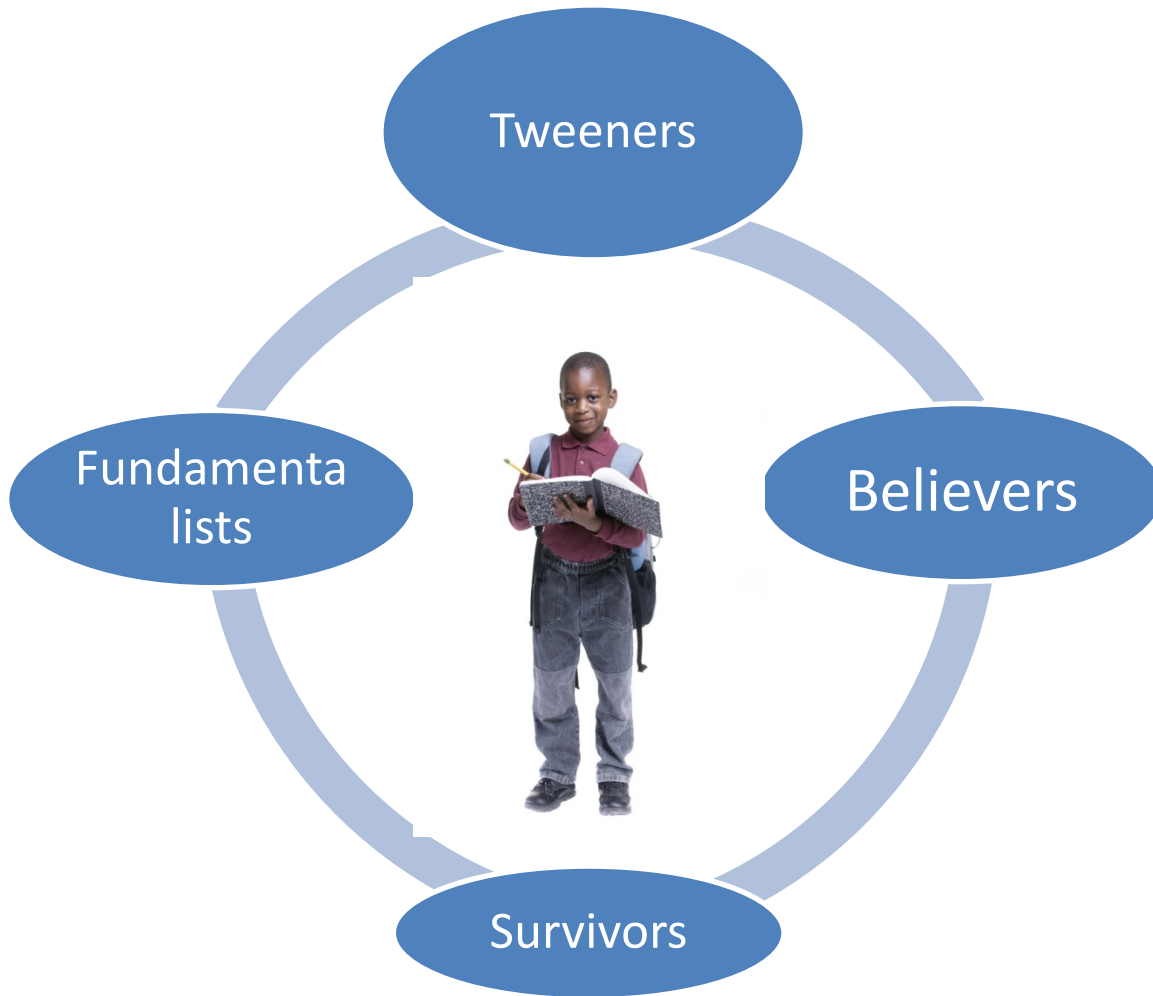
Peterson(2002), Is Your School Culture toxic or positive? Education World (6)2

***Good to Great*, Jim Collins**

What do great corporations/organizations do differently than good/average organizations?

1. They seek and find the “brutal facts”
2. They get the right people on the “bus” and sit them in the “right seats”

The Quandary



Believers

Objective:

Success for All Students

The Believers

- Very intrinsically motivated
- Flexibility with students (academically and behaviorally)
- Mission driven/connection to school or community
- Willing to confront negative talk and attitudes towards children, but only under extreme circumstances
- Varied levels of pedagogical and professional skill

Pause to Think!

- Is your school culture focused on success for students or the likes/dislikes of the adults?
- Are your Believers politically active or docile?
- Are your Believers active in the informal culture?

Tweeners

Objective:

**To Find Comfort Zone
Within the Organization**

The Tweeners

- Loosely-coupled with the school mission
- Enthusiastic about the idealistic nature of school, but have not quite hit the tipping point
- They stay out of school and district politics
- Follows instructions as given by administration creating a 'Wall of Silence' (considered "good" teachers)
- One extreme experience (Moment of Truth) can swing them to be a believer or a fundamentalist

Pause to Think!

- Do you have a significant amount of turnover among your Tweeners? If so, why? If not, what do you do to support and retain them?
- Who supports your Tweeners when they have their “Moment of Truth”?

Survivors

Objective:

Survival

Survivors

- Overwhelming nature of the job or life has caused clinical depression (Burnout)
- No political or organizational aspirations
- Create subcontracts with student to broker a “cease-fire” agreement
- Little to no professional practice is evident
- All members of the organization agree that they do not belong in the profession
- Removal and treatment is the only possible remedy

Pause to Think!

- Do you have colleagues that you feel may be Survivors or in the process of becoming a Survivor?
- If so, have you reached out to him/her? Has administration addressed the issue?
- How have your Survivors impacted students?

Fundamentalists

Objective:

**Maintain Status Quo
(Leave Me Alone!)**

Fundamentalists

- Believe not all children can learn (Social Darwinists)
- Believe that school reform is a waste of time
- Believe in autonomy and academic freedom
- Organize to resist threat(s) to status quo
- Believe that gaps in learning are due to outside forces (students, parents, administration)
- Have varied levels of pedagogical skills

Methods:

The Three “D’s”

- Defame
- Disrupt
- Distract

Pause to Think!

- Do you have an active group of Fundamentalists at your school? If so, how have they affected the culture?
- Do your Believers challenge your Fundamentalists?
- Have you witnessed any of the three D's? If so, how has it affected your school?

The Real Difference

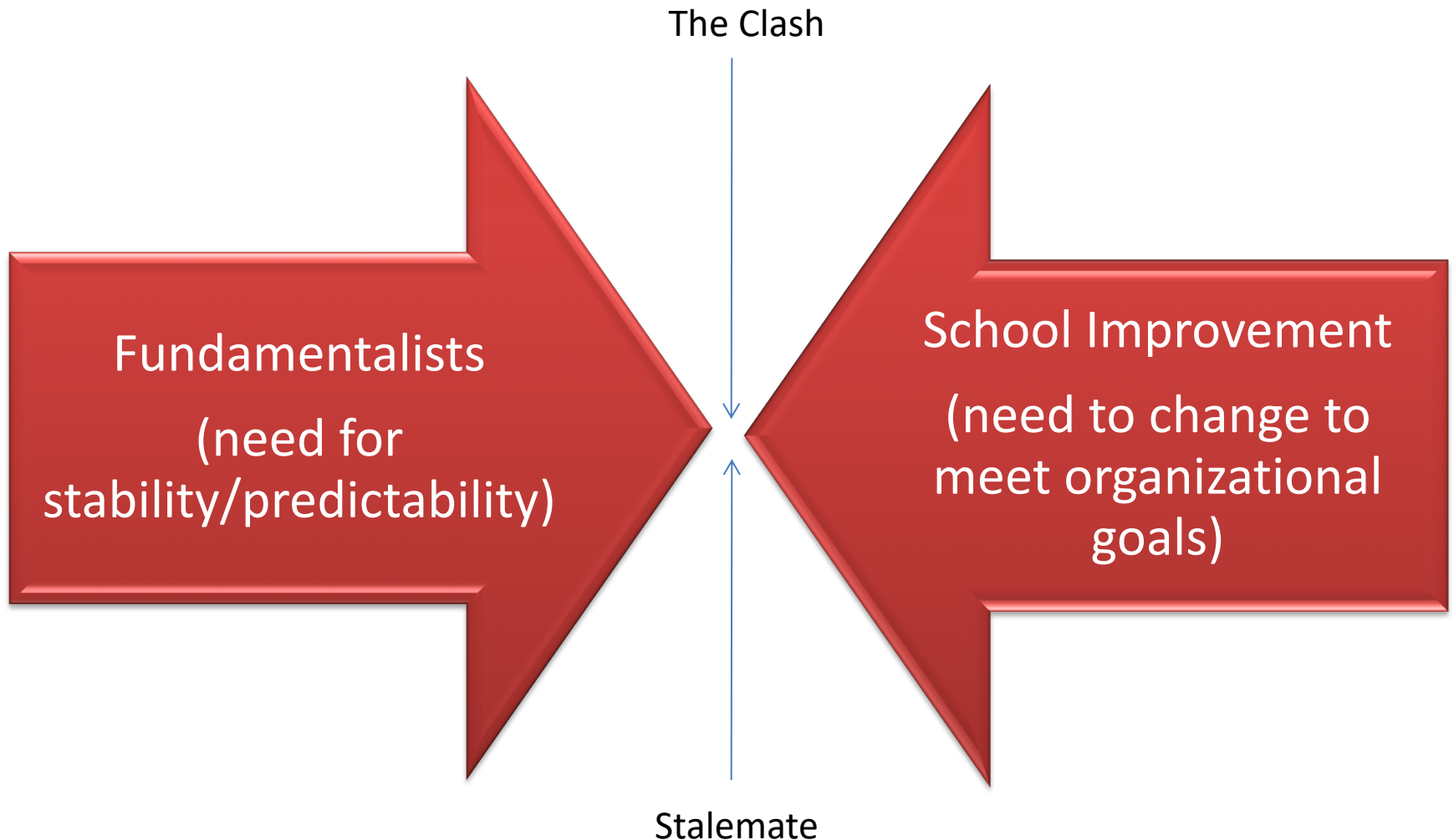
Believers

- Goal: Success for Every Student
- Accepts that change (the right change) is necessary to improve student performance
- Student interest is more important than personal interest (Public Servant)

Fundamentalists

- Goal: Maintain Status Quo
- Rejects any substantive change if it clashes with personal agenda
- Self-interest is more important than student interest (Self Servant)

The Current State of School Reform



Can Fundamentalism Be Reversed?

Fundamentalist

Change Is Not Easy

“Drop Your Tools” Research

- People persist when they are given no clear reason to change
- People persist when they do not trust the person who tells them to change
- People persist when they view the alternative as more frightening
- To change may mean admitting failure

(Maclean, *Young Men and Fire*, 1992)

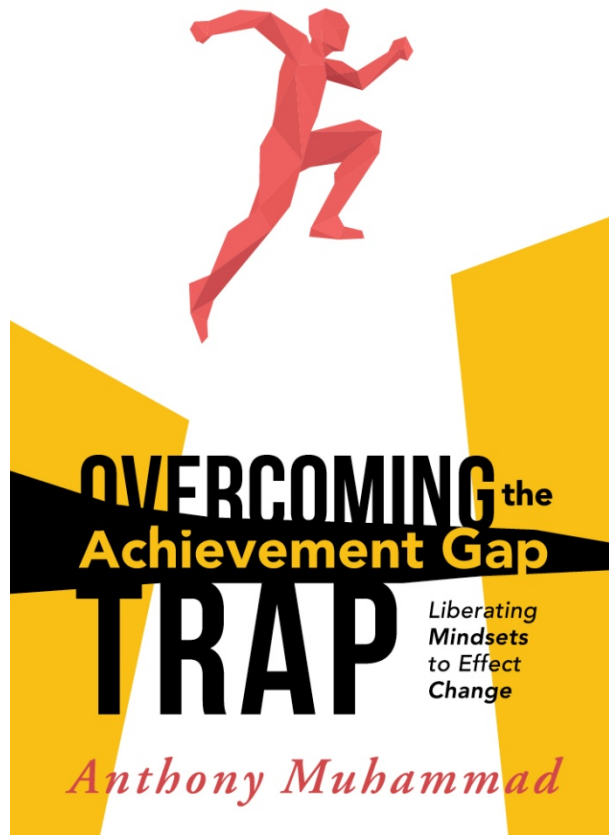
How do we respond?

- **Level 1** – Make a clear case for change
- **Level 2** – Develop relationships, do not ostracize
- **Level 3** – Increase capacity and consider the context
- **Level 4** – Monitor Strongly

Behavior, not People!

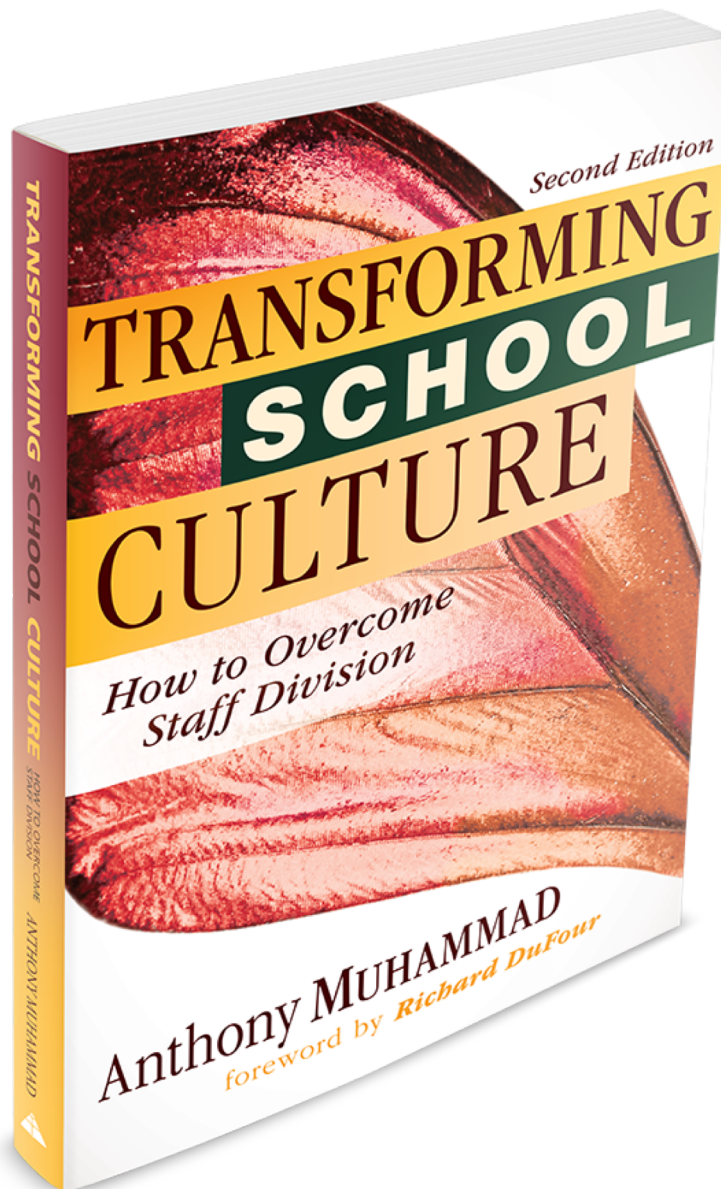
- The focus in transforming culture is on changing behavior, not getting rid of people.
- The first 3 levels of Fundamentalism are either caused or influenced by inappropriate or poor leadership!
- “Transformation” is different than “Information”

New Release!



Anthony Muhammad has hereby entered the ongoing debate in America about the compatibility of equity, excellence, and meritocracy in the nation's quest to eradicate achievement gaps. It's a meaningful and worthwhile read!

*Ronald Ferguson, Faculty Director
Harvard Achievement Gap Initiative*



AVAILABLE
from Solution Tree



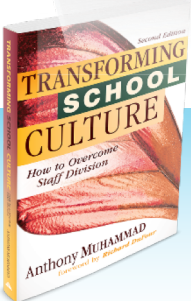
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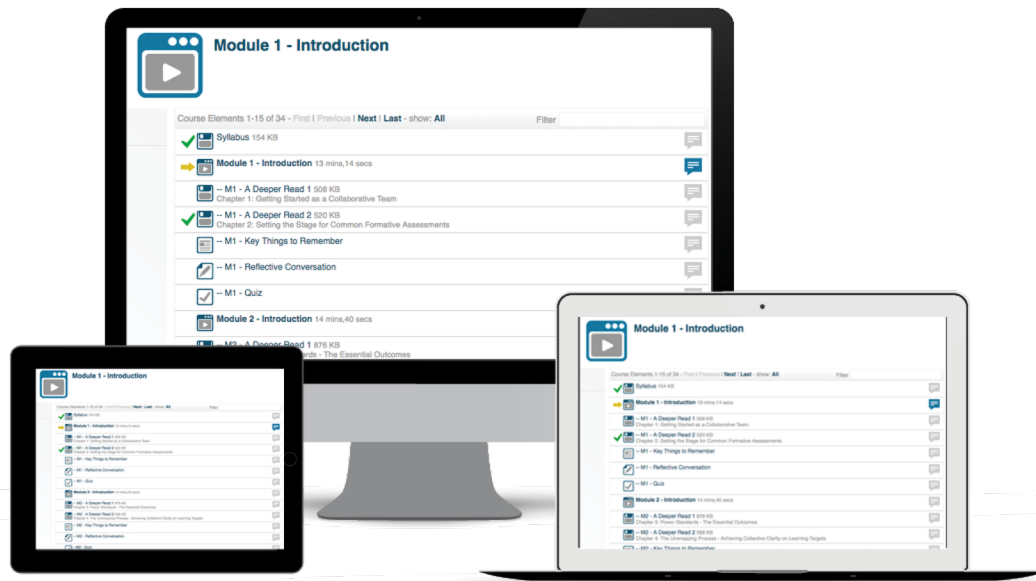
With the **Transforming School Culture** video playlist, you'll get curated videos that align to the chapters in the book.



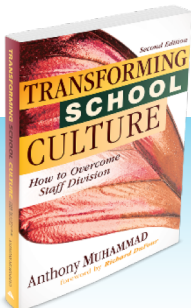
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